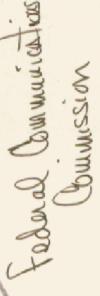
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FCC poised to lift the ban on cross-ownership

By Michael Liedtke ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — The loosening of rules on how many newspapers and broadcast stations a company can own is being happily awaited by some media chains, while critics fear the result will be fewer public voices.

The changes, expected to pass 3-2 in a Federal Communications Commission vote Monday, will end a 28-year ban on ownership of newspapers and broadcast stations — television or radio — in the same market. The prohibition was intended to preserve a variety of viewpoints.

Cross-ownership has been barred in all but a few cities, including Chicago, Atlanta and Milwaukee, where it existed before the ban.

The FCC also is expected to let companies build their portfolio of TV stations up to a new limit of 45 percent of the total U.S. market. The limit is now 35 percent.

The vision of fewer owners controlling more communication channels deeply troubles some people. They predict even more cutbacks in alreadyshrinking newsrooms, resulting in more superficial, homogeneous coverage that ignores crucial community issues.

"If the FCC does this, we will have started down the path to the end of democracy," said Seattle Times publisher Frank Blethen.

Supporters of the changes envision more nimble and profitable businesses, pooling the resources of newspapers and broadcasters to deliver better coverage.

"It gives you a much bigger megaphone to talk through," said William Dean Singleton, Media metamorphosis

The Federal Communications Commission will vote on Monday to modify its regulations on media ownership. Some of the largest media companies that will be affected by these changes already own key communication outlets,

Top television broadcasters

Company	Number of stations	Percentage of household reach
Viacom Inc. Confirmed	39	38.8%
News Corp.	35	37.8%
General Electric Co. 1 2 2003	14	33.6%
Paxson Contempications Corp. Tribune Co.	65	30.9%
Tribune Co.	26	30.0%
Walt Disney Co.	10	23.6%

Top radio broadcasters

	Number of stations	2001 revenue (in millions)
Clear Channel Communications Inc.	1,238	\$3,265.4
Viacom Inc. (Infinity)	183	\$2,081.1
Cox Enterprises Inc.	79	\$431.4
Entercom Communications Corp.	103	this they the property of
Walt Disney Co.	59	\$403.9

Newspaper companies

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Company	Number of newspapers	Circulation* (in millions)
Gannett Co.	timbo 100 Rub util	1800 SHATE 7.7
Knight Ridder	and the 31 appropria	5.1
Tribune Co:	milwit he 12 change non-	special private 5.1
New York Times Co.	19	3.2
Hearst Corp.	dening felt 12 c sight total	unti feminer 2.4

SOURCES: The companies; The Center for Public Integrity; Audit Bureau of Circulations: BIA Financial Network; Nielsen Media Research

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president of Denver-based MediaNews Group, a newspaper publisher considering expansion into TV.

With the rise of cable TV and the Internet, top media companies persuaded the FCC's three Republicans that the restrictions are no longer

needed. The commission's two Democrats are not convinced.

Most people still turn to TV stations or newspapers for local news. Not all, however, depend on both sources. Some media companies want to

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